

About Us

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Our Mission

The mission of Beyond Talent is to empower non-traditional high school graduates in the Washington, DC, area to overcome barriers to higher education and employment so they can succeed, and start cycles of success in their communities. Our Vision

Beyond Talent is working towards a DC metropolitan area whose residents are empowered to achieve their full educational and economic potential. Our Name "Beyond talent lie all the usual words: discipline, love, luck–and above all, endurance." James Baldwin

The Beyond Talent name is inspired by the work of 20th century author and civil rights activist, James Baldwin. Best known for his works *Go Tell it On the Mountain*, and *Notes of a Native Son*, Baldwin recognized that individual achievement cannot rely entirely on individual capabilities. The support of family, friends, mentors and the community is essential to bolster the hard work and natural ability of the individual. Beyond Talent exists to lend this kind of support to uniquely capable adult learners.

To learn more on James Baldwin, visit:

[PBS American Masters](#)

[Wikipedia.org entry on James Baldwin](#) [Our Programs](#)

In the District, which has a high school dropout rate of more than 50 percent, GED and other alternative programs are enrolling more and more young people each year. These programs receive requests from their graduates for support during the transition to higher education; however, they are not equipped to provide the level of encouragement or the type of assistance their participants need. As an independent, central organization, Beyond Talent fills the gap through three programs:

- Next Steps/College and Career Counseling
- Peer Mentoring
- College Compass [Our Impact](#)

[FY 2008 Annual Report](#)

[FY 2003-2007 Impact Report](#) [Our Staff](#) [Ellie Phillips, Founder & Executive Director](#)

Ellie Phillips has been working in youth and adult basic education programs in the District of Columbia since 2001, first as an AmeriCorps volunteer, then as a Lifelong Learning Coach in Mayor Anthony Williams' Literacy Initiative, and finally as a GED program director. In 2003, recognizing the need for transitional support services for graduates of GED and External Diploma Programs, Ellie founded Beyond Talent. As Executive Director, she was selected to participate in two programs that provide non-profit management and capacity-building training at no cost to select non-profit leaders—Fair Chance and the Strategic Partnerships Initiative of the Mayor's Office of Partnerships and Grants Development. In 2007, Ellie became Beyond Talent's first full-time staff member.

She has also worked as a consultant in the District of Columbia Public Schools through organizations such as DC WritersCorps and Classroom, Inc. While serving in the Mayor Williams' Literacy Initiative, Ms. Phillips received a scholarship from the Washington, DC, State Education Agency to attend University of the District of Columbia and earn a graduate certification in adult education (completed in 2003). Ms. Phillips also has a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University. Emily Breines, Program Associate

Emily Breines comes to Beyond Talent through Literacy*AmeriCorps. She graduated from Muhlenberg College (Allentown, PA) in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in sociology and Women's Studies, and spent the past year in France working as an English language assistant in a high school and middle school. Before moving to DC in September 2009 to work for Beyond Talent, she volunteered at the Women's Center in Cambridge, Mass., a comprehensive community center for women in need. As a high school student, she began volunteering at a transitional shelter for battered women and their children in Newton, Mass., and continued volunteering there and at other organizations throughout college. She loves mentoring youth and teens, and working with a team of people toward a greater good. Christine Thelen, Program Associate

Hailing from Grand Rapids, Michigan, Christine Thelen is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan with a

bachelor's degree in history. While in college, she became heavily involved in student government, advocating for the interests of students and helping build strong communities on campus. She chose Beyond Talent for her year of AmeriCorps service because the organization's mission aligns with her strong interest in advancing access to postsecondary education and training for all. Christine joins Beyond Talent through President Obama's Recovery Corps initiative. Pollyanne Power, College Compass Writing Instructor

Pollyanne Power has 23 years of experience teaching adults. Her passion for adult education began right after college when she volunteered to teach GED to previously incarcerated individuals in New York. Since then she has taught in Namibia, the Marshall Islands, Seattle, and Washington, DC. She has taught at both the College of the Marshall Islands and Montgomery Community College, but she much prefers to work with people who are acquiring basic writing skills. Pollyanne has a bachelor's degree in English from Barnard College and master's in fiction writing from Warren Wilson College. Pollyanne writes fiction in her free time and lives in DC with her husband and son. Ron Meeks, College Compass Math Instructor

Ronald Meeks has 36 years as an instructor of mathematics and statistics. For more than 3 decades, he has taught college students in various courses including developmental math, pre-algebra, college algebra, basic statistics, finite math, and Calculus. His career also includes 27 years as a federal statistician. This career included working first at the U.S. Department of Commerce, then at the Department of Health and Human Services, and finally at the National Science Foundation. Work at those agencies included developing skills in survey development and methodology as well as data collection and analysis. His education includes graduate study in the MTS program in mathematics and statistics at Catholic University of America and undergraduate study in mathematics at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

Additional Resources

Beyond Talent is listed on GuideStar.org. Click the logo to search GuideStar's database of more than 1.7 million nonprofit organizations

[Beyond Talent's IRS Filings](#)

[2008 Form 990](#)

[2007 Form 990](#)

[2006 Form 990](#)

[2005 Form 990](#)